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RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC PRIORITY
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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PINR](#) [EAID](#) [KV](#) [UNMIK](#)
SUBJECT: KOSOVO: NORTH MITROVICA AMERICAN CORNER STILL
OPEN, PRESSURE FROM SERB HARDLINERS CONTINUES

Classified By: Ambassador Tina S. Kaidanow for Reasons 1.4 (b), (d).

11. (C) SUMMARY. The American Corner in the UNMIK library of northern Mitrovica remains open, but its existence continues to be threatened by the Kosovo Serb parallel municipal government. UNMIK has refused to hand over control of the building to parallel mayor Nenad Toplicevic, a member of the Serbian Radical Party (SRS). Nonetheless, the parallel government continues to pressure the directors of the center and has made clear its intention to eventually take over the building and shut down the Corner. Serbian State Secretary for Kosovo Oliver Ivanovic has made efforts to insulate the Corner from local politics, but his proposed solution involves a different form of takeover - by the Serbian Ministry of Culture. While the Corner continues to serve the Serb community in northern Kosovo, we do not have full range of use; security concerns make it difficult for officers to schedule public appearances there despite a brisk business in English lessons, internet and computer classes, and other activities, which continue uninterrupted. Our stance remains firmly behind keeping the Corner open, but not at the cost of legitimizing the parallel mayor or the Serbian Ministry of Culture and thus aiding the Serbian government to increase its reach in Kosovo. END SUMMARY

Safe...For Now

12. (C) After months of threats, intimidation, and other unpleasantness from the Kosovo Serb parallel municipal government in north Mitrovica, the American Corner in the UNMIK-administered library remains open. We spoke with UNMIK Acting Regional Representative Juozas Kazlas (an Amcit) on January 23, who told us that he would not turn over control of the library to the parallel government (or anyone else), despite the persistent demands of parallel mayor Nenad Toplicevic that he do so. According to Kazlas, UNMIK would continue to administer certain functions in northern Mitrovica under UNSCR 1244 and would not bend to the will of Toplicevic, who Kazlas described as a "troublesome" figure. Kazlas said a new Regional Representative would be appointed by UNMIK headquarters in Pristina in the coming weeks, but he did not expect this position to change. (Note: UNMIK continues to administer certain functions in north Mitrovica under UNMIK Administration Mitrovica (UAM), which includes this library. End Note.)

Threats and Intimidation

¶3. (C) At an earlier meeting on December 22, 2008, librarians Dajana Gocmanac and Milena Tepavcevic described the pressure put on them by Toplicevic and other SRS members of the parallel government. Gocmanac, an employee of the municipal library of Mitrovica (and therefore employed by the parallel government) was compelled in Fall 2008 to transfer out of the UNMIK library and the American Corner to the parallel government-run municipal library, and forbidden by the head librarian there to even visit the American Corner. Tepavcevic continues to run the Corner alone but told us she has been visited several times by Toplicevic and deputy parallel mayor Ljubisa Petrovic, a member of the Democratic Party of Serbia (DSS), who have both threatened to take over the building and shut the Corner down. Tepavcevic told us that she had felt compelled to remove a USAID plaque from the building, even though USAID had renovated and expanded the structure in 2007 (at a cost of \$130,000) to accommodate the Corner. As recently as January 20, Tepavcevic reported that she remained under intense pressure to abandon her work.

Ivanovic's Plan

¶4. (C) The two librarians appealed to State Secretary in the Serbian Ministry for Kosovo Oliver Ivanovic for help. Ivanovic, a Kosovo Serb who lives in Mitrovica, has discussed the problem with us several times, most recently on January 16. His proposed solution has been for the Serbian Ministry of Culture to take over the building and upgrade the library's status within the Serbian government system, thus

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insulating it from local political control. To this end, Ivanovic also requested that UNMIK hand over the library, but to the Serbian Ministry of Culture instead of the parallel municipal government. Ivanovic has asked for our assistance in persuading UNMIK to do this, but we have declined.

Limited Use for USG

¶5. (C) The generally unfavorable security situation in Serb-majority northern Kosovo and the specific pressure aimed at the Corner have prevented the Embassy from fully utilizing this resource in our effort to perform outreach among Kosovo Serbs. Visits by Embassy personnel for any reason are difficult to schedule due to security restrictions, and English classes conducted by the Embassy's English Language Fellows have at times been suspended for similar reasons. Tepavcevic reports, however, that the number of visitors, particularly children, to the Corner has not decreased significantly since Kosovo's independence in February 2008. Computer classes, English lessons (when available), reading materials, and other services offered by the Corner remain popular. She also told us in an earlier conversation that the children of northern Kosovo Serb hardline leaders Marko Jaksic and Milan Ivanovic visit the Corner often, despite their parents' strong opposition to USG Kosovo policy and Kosovo's independent government.

Comment: Not At Any Cost

¶6. (C) We are encouraged that UNMIK has refused to hand over control of the library to either the parallel municipal government or the Serbian Ministry of Culture. The parallel government has made clear its intention to eject the USG presence represented by the Corner from northern Kosovo and we strongly believe nothing will dissuade them from pursuing this goal if given the chance. While we will continue to fully support the Corner as long as it remains open, the plan envisioned by Oliver Ivanovic is also an unacceptable alternative to current arrangements. While most of the USG funds used for the Corner were a fixed investment, about \$35,000 worth of USG-provided computers, books, furniture, and other equipment remains in the Corner and would have to be repossessed if the Corner were closed. The ideal solution

would be for the Serbian government to use its considerable influence with the parallel municipal government to persuade it to back down from a provocative confrontation with the USG. In the meantime, we will continue to advise UNMIK to stand fast and retain control of the library. END COMMENT.
KAIDANOW